

Wisconsin SCORP

Regional Demographic Profile

Great Northwest



Applied Population Lab and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

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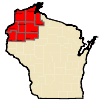
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ABOUT THIS REPORT

The following is a demographic profile of the Great Northwest SCORP Region completed by the Applied Population Laboratory, University of Wisconsin- Madison. This profile was created to inform the 2005-2010 SCORP planning process by providing demographic background information for understanding the context within which outdoor recreation occurs. Similar demographic profiles are provided for each of the eight SCORP Regions, and one summary profile for the state of Wisconsin compares Region to Region.

The profile includes current, past and projected information on population demographics and housing within the Great Northwest Region. Data are displayed in maps, tables, and charts and summarized briefly in text. We begin by painting a demographic picture of the current conditions in the Region using data from Census 2000 and from the Wisconsin Department of Administration's Population Estimates (2004). Next, we address historical trends that have shaped the Great Northwest Region over the past several decades. We include information on how the population has been changing over time, where housing development has been rapidly occurring, and the impact that natural amenities may have on these changes. Finally, we use population projections from the Wisconsin Dept. of Administration to discuss how the population of the Great Northwest Region might change over the next several years.

It is important for planners to consider demographic information when planning for outdoor recreation because characteristics of the population impact demand for different types of outdoor recreation. For instance, areas with growing populations may experience increasing demand for recreational resources, and areas with aging populations may demand different types of resources than those with young populations. Similarly, income, education, race, and sex have all been shown to affect preferences for outdoor recreation.

Starting in 1999, the Wisconsin DNR initiated a three-year study to identify, with considerable input from the public and non-profit groups, places in the state that will be critical in meeting Wisconsin's long-term conservation and recreation needs. The resulting 229 "Legacy Places" collectively are the special places that "make Wisconsin Wisconsin." The WDNR only represents the Legacy Places as points because specifically identifying which lands and waters associated with each place are most appropriate to maintain and protect is most appropriately left to a locally-focused planning process. The Legacy Places are represented on many of the maps that you will see in this report. The points noted with a star in the center are Legacy Places that the WDNR has determined to have particularly high recreation potential. The Land Legacy information helps to bring cultural and environmental meaning to the demographic data that we present.

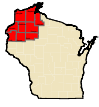
The principal author of this report is Richelle Winkler (rwinkler@ssc.wisc.edu) of the Applied Population Laboratory, with direction provided by Jeff Prey (Jeff.Prey@dnr.state.wi.us) of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. With appreciation and thanks, the author would like to acknowledge the insight and assistance provided by Chris Whelpley, David Long, Bill Buckingham, John Pohlman, Dan Veroff, Nick Fisher, and Don Field. Each lent their skills and talents in preparing data, constructing tables and charts, formatting, and editing text. For more information about this report, the authors can be contacted via email.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Great Northwest Region is located in the Northwest part of the state and encompasses Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas, Sawyer, Washburn, Burnett, Rusk, Barron, and Polk Counties. The Region is largely rural and sparsely populated. The Duluth/Superior metropolitan area in northwest Douglas County and the Twin Cities metropolitan area across the St. Croix River in Minnesota to the southwest of Polk County are the major urban centers that impact the Region.

- In 2004, the Great Northwest Region had an estimated population of 232,361 residents. The population of the Region is concentrated around Superior, WI and in the Southwest portion of the Region, nearer to the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area. Approximately 58% of residents live in Douglas, Barron, or Polk Counties.
- The population of the Great Northwest Region is mostly rural (about 75%). The majority of recent population growth and housing development has been occurring in small villages and rural towns, rather than in the larger cities of the Region.
- 94% of the population is White/Caucasian. There is some Native American influence, especially in Sawyer, Ashland, and Burnett Counties.
- Several lakes and abundant forests attract seasonal residents, tourists, and in-migrating retirees to the Great Northwest Region. About 25% of all housing units in the Region are for seasonal use, and about 10% of all workers are employed in a tourism-related industry.
- In-migrating retirees and out-migrating young adults produce a relatively old population structure in the Region. Median age for the Great Northwest Region in 2000 was about 40 years. The oldest county was Burnett, with a median age of 44 years. The population is projected to continue to age in the coming years and to reach 43.4 years for the Great Northwest Region and 50.1 years for Burnett County by 2010.
- In comparison with the rest of the state, people in the Great Northwest are less educated, have lower income, and have relatively low housing values. Median household income is highest near the metropolitan areas of Duluth/Superior and Minneapolis/St. Paul. Housing values are highest near metropolitan areas and in lakes districts.
- Population in this Region has been growing since 1970, increasing by 31% between 1970 and 2004. Burnett, Polk, and Sawyer Counties have been growing at an especially quick pace.
- Housing development has been occurring at a faster rate than population growth. Between 1950 and 2004, the number of housing units in the Region almost doubled (98% increase). Housing development occurred particularly fast in the 1970's (increase of 37% over the decade) and between 2000 and 2004 (increase of 8,093 units, or 6.3%, in 4 years).
- According to Johnson and Beale's recreational county classifications, Bayfield, Burnett, Sawyer, and Washburn Counties have many recreation-based resources and high demand for recreation. Because of these resources, these counties might be expected to experience population growth and housing development at a disproportionately fast pace.
- Population is projected to continue to increase in the Great Northwest Region over the next several years, especially in Polk, Burnett, and Sawyer Counties. Polk County is expected to add 5,722 residents between 2004 and 2020, for an increase of 13%.



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POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

According to the Wisconsin Department of Administration population estimates (WDOA 2004), 232,361 people live in the Great Northwest Region. This amounts to about 25 persons per square mile.

Figure 1 shows population distribution for the Great Northwest Region by county. Most of the people in the Region live in Barron, Douglas, or Polk County. Together, they account for about 58% of the population in the Great Northwest Region. Douglas County is home to the City of Superior and is influenced by the nearby presence of Duluth, MN. Barron County is largely agricultural and has several small cities. Polk County has been growing quickly over the past several years and is increasingly becoming a suburb of Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN.

Figure 1
County Population Distribution, 2004

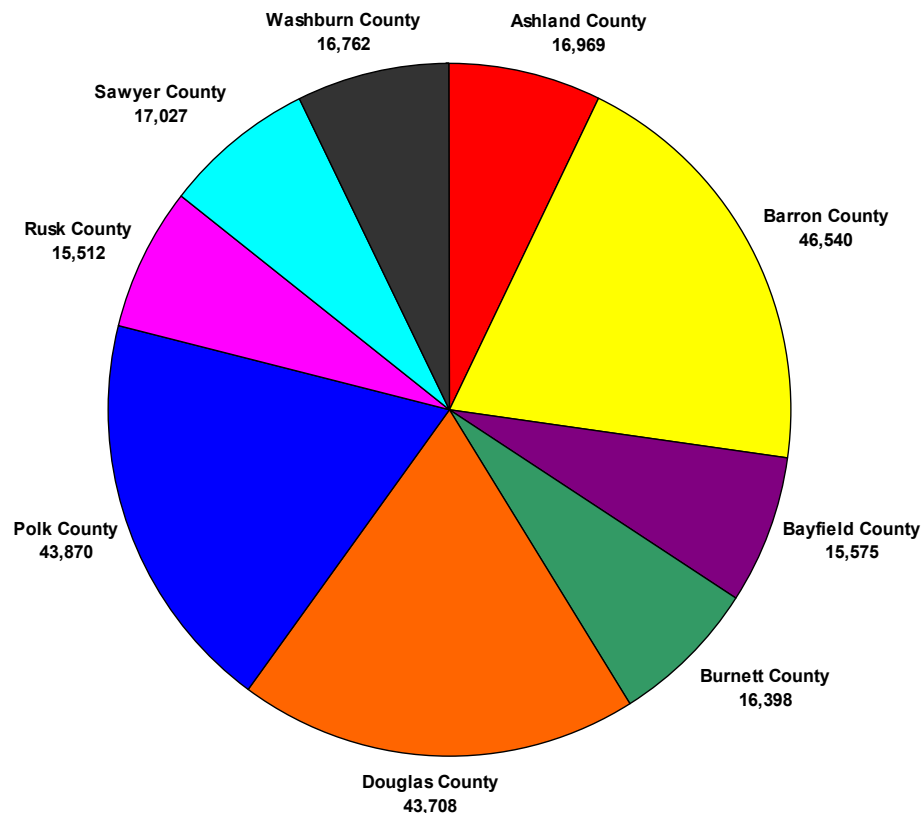


Figure 2 shows population density by municipality (cities, villages, and towns). This view allows us to see variation within counties. The majority of the landscape in the Great Northwest Region is made up of low population density towns, scattered with small cities and villages that have higher population densities. Polk County is somewhat different, with most towns having higher densities suggestive of sprawl.



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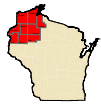
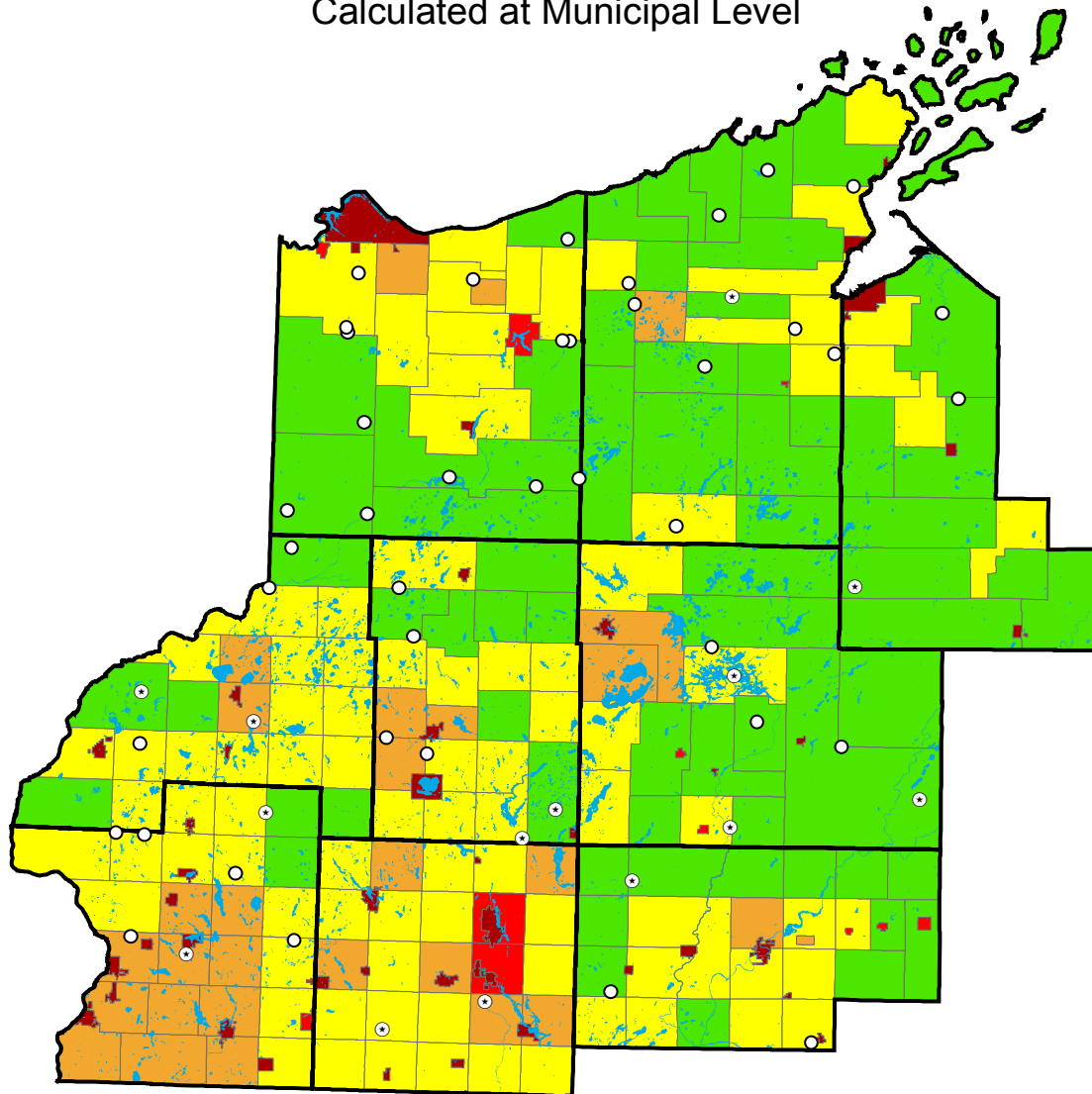


Figure 2

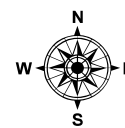
Population Density, 2004

Calculated at Municipal Level



Persons per Square Mile

Less than 10	Land Legacy Points
10 - 29.99	High Recreation Potential Land Legacy Points
30 - 74.99	Water
75 - 199.99	County Boundaries
200 or More	



0 15 30
Miles

Sources: Tiger 2003, Wisconsin DOA 2004



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URBAN/RURAL

Most people in the Great Northwest Region live in rural areas. Just over 25% of people live in urban areas, according to 2000 Census definitions. This includes people who live in densely settled territory with a population of 2,500 or more.

Table 1 shows the proportion of people living in urban places by county for the Great Northwest Region. According to the Census definition, Bayfield, Burnett, and Sawyer Counties did not have any urban areas in 2000.

Table 1
Urbanization in the Great Northwest Region, 2000

	Total Population	Urban Population	Percent Urban
Ashland County	16,866	7,851	46.5%
Barron County	44,963	12,532	27.9%
Bayfield County	15,013	0	0.0%
Burnett County	15,674	0	0.0%
Douglas County	43,287	26,664	61.6%
Polk County	41,319	2,849	6.9%
Rusk County	15,347	3,968	25.9%
Sawyer County	16,196	0	0.0%
Washburn County	16,036	2,644	16.5%
Great Northwest Region	224,701	56,508	25.1%

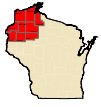
Source: Census 2000, Summary File 1



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HOUSING DISTRIBUTION

Housing development impacts both the supply and the demand for outdoor recreation. Housing affects the *supply* of outdoor recreation resources by taking up land that may previously have been considered to be recreational or have potential for recreation activities. Outdoor recreation (especially those activities that require a substantial amount of open space, like backpacking, ATV riding, or hunting) is largely considered incompatible with higher density housing development.

Housing development also impacts *demand* for outdoor recreation. At the most basic level, housing development in an area generally means more people in that area who are likely to participate in some form of recreation activity nearby. In this way, housing unit counts inform outdoor recreation planners similarly to population counts.

Examining housing is especially useful to recreation planners because population counts do not include seasonal residents. Seasonal residents are an important component of demand for outdoor recreation in Wisconsin. Looking at housing development (including both permanent and seasonal homes) can offer a more complete view of where demand for outdoor recreation occurs than looking at population distribution alone.

Figure 3 shows the 2000 distribution of housing density in the Great Northwest Region by Census Block Group. The map looks similar to the population map presented above, except that the influence of seasonal housing stands out in Burnett, Washburn, and western Sawyer Counties. The housing map shows almost as much development in these counties as it does in Polk and Barron Counties, where the full-time resident population is much higher.



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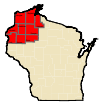
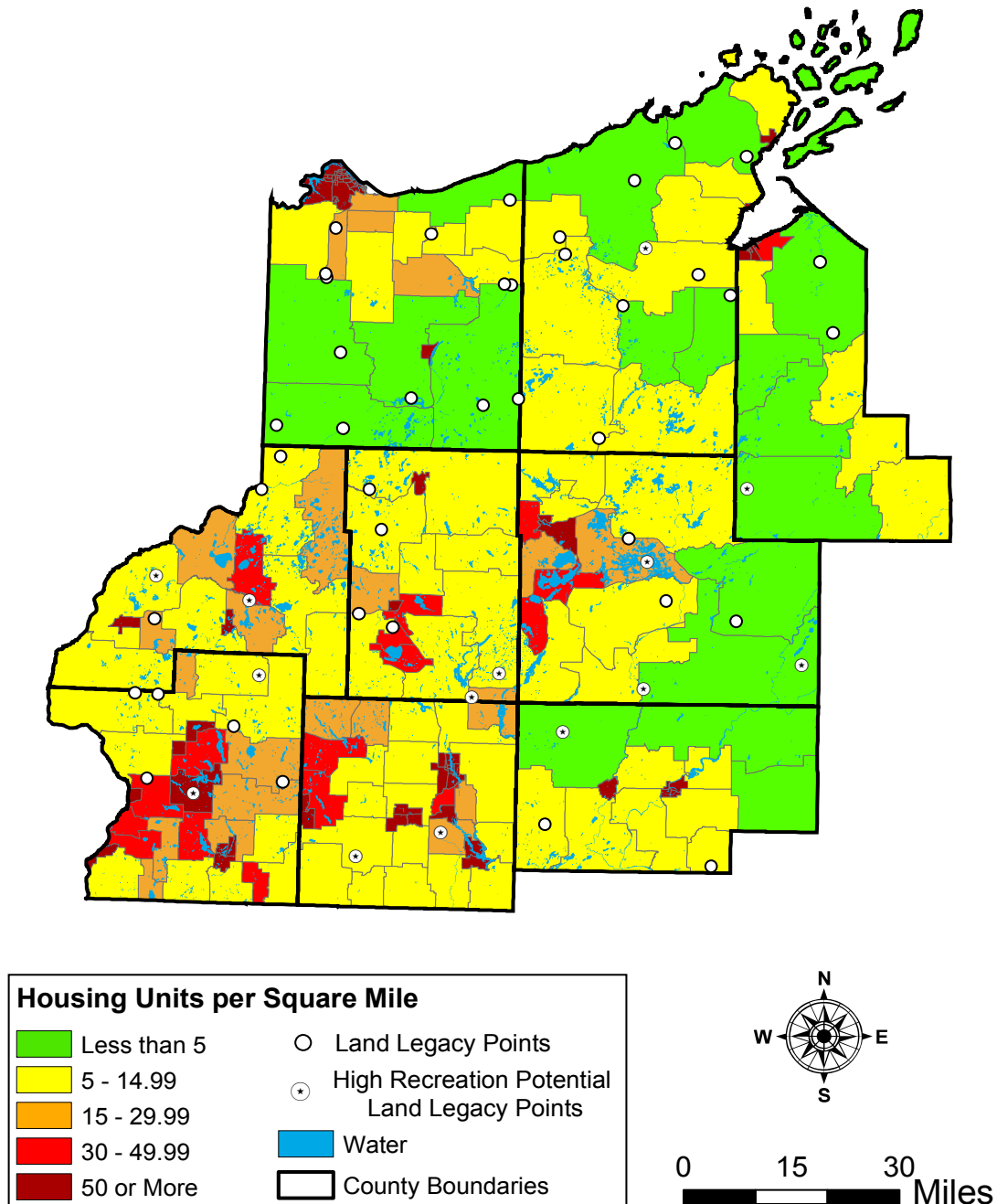


Figure 3

Housing Density, 2000

Calculated at Block Group Level



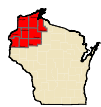
Sources: TIGER 2000, Census 2000



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SEASONAL HOUSING AND TOURISM

Area residents constitute much of the demand for outdoor recreation, but a certain amount of demand also comes from non-residents, like seasonal home-owners and tourists. Table 2 shows the importance of seasonal housing and tourism in the Great Northwest Region. Seasonal housing is prominent in this Region, with about 25% of all housing units being for seasonal or recreational use, compared to only 6.3% for the state as a whole. In Bayfield, Burnett and Washburn Counties, more than 1 in every 3 housing units is seasonal. In Sawyer County, seasonal homes account for almost half (48.5%) of all housing units.

Measuring the number of tourists who visit the Great Northwest Region is more difficult because good data is not readily available. Table 2 shows the percent of all workers age 16 and over who are employed in arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and/or food services industries. We provide this employment measure with the idea that the more tourists who are visiting an area, the more people will be employed in tourism-related work. Tourism-related employment is relatively important in the Great Northwest Region, and especially important in Sawyer, Bayfield, Burnett and Ashland Counties.

Table 2
Seasonal Housing and Tourism in the Great Northwest Region, 2000

	Population	Housing Units	% Seasonal	% Employed in Tourism
Ashland County	16,866	8,883	18.5%	11.2%
Barron County	44,963	20,969	11.0%	8.4%
Bayfield County	15,013	11,640	42.3%	12.8%
Burnett County	15,674	12,582	45.0%	11.3%
Douglas County	43,287	20,356	8.6%	10.3%
Polk County	41,319	21,129	19.9%	6.1%
Rusk County	15,347	7,609	15.1%	6.2%
Sawyer County	16,196	13,722	48.5%	16.8%
Washburn County	16,036	10,814	35.3%	8.9%
Great Northwest Region	224,701	127,704	25.1%	9.5%

Source: Census 2000, Summary File 1

Figures 4 and 5 show the distribution of seasonal housing and tourism at the Census Block Group level. These activities tend to be clustered together near lakes. You can see that in some areas the majority of all housing units are for seasonal use and at least 20% of all workers are employed in tourism-related industries.



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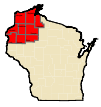
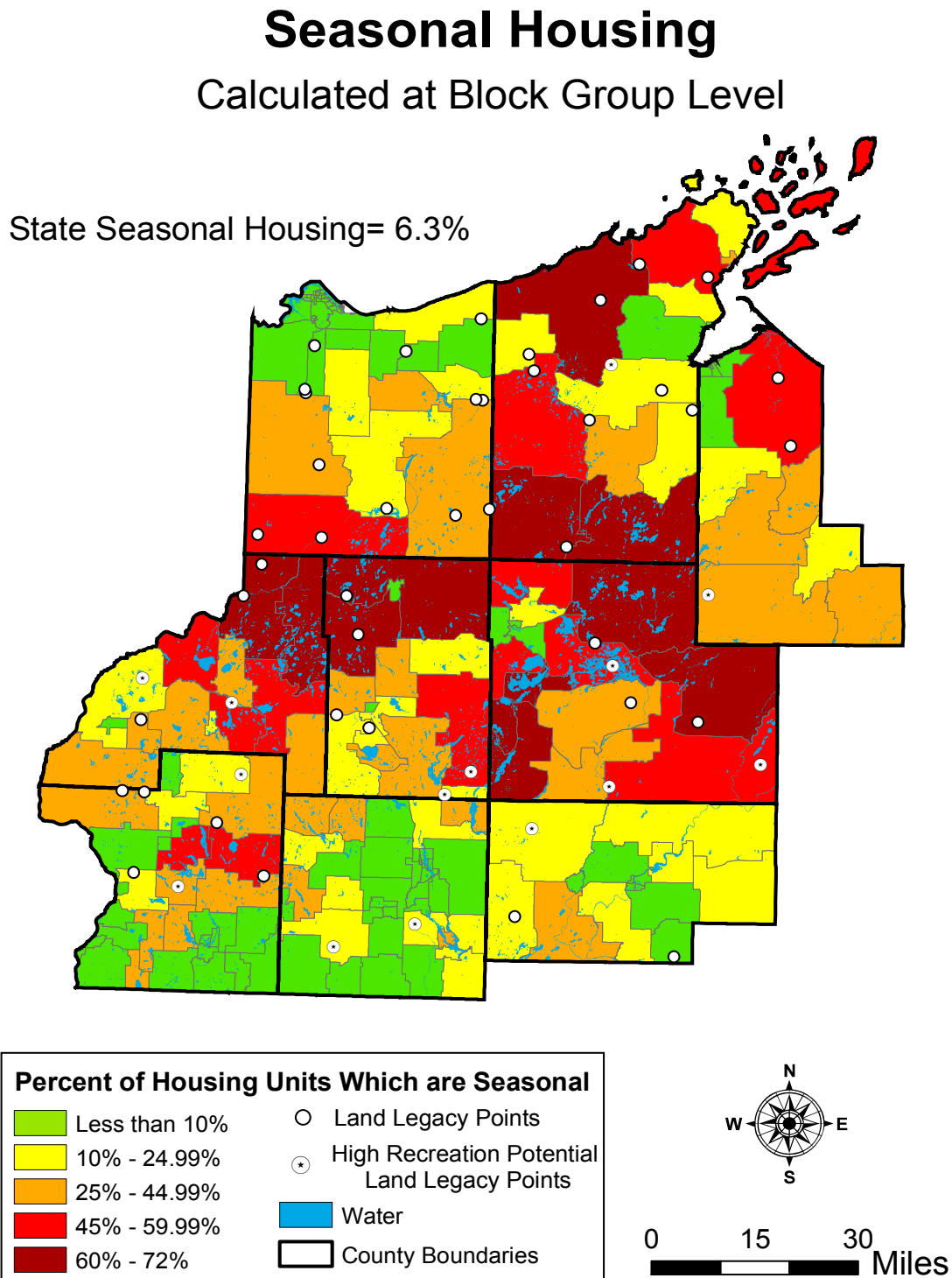


Figure 4



Sources: TIGER 2000, Census 2000



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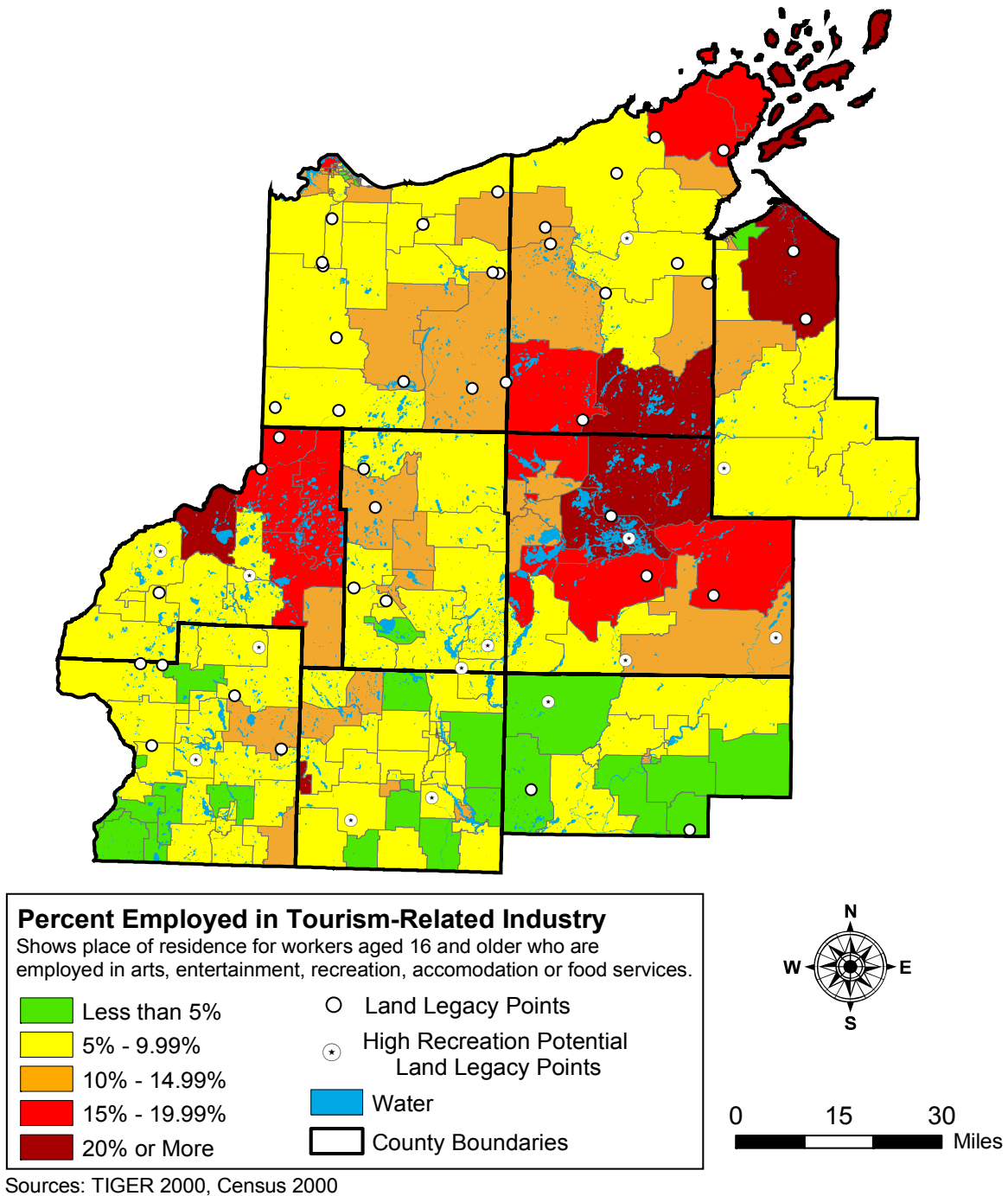




Figure 5

Tourism Industry Employment

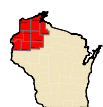
Calculated at Block Group Level



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DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Social and economic characteristics of the population also influence participation in outdoor recreation. For instance, older people tend to participate in different recreational activities than young people; income may influence ability to participate in particular outdoor activities, like golfing; and education may have something to do with whether or not someone engages in nature study. These types of social and economic characteristics of the population vary across space. Near urban centers, people tend to make more money; and near universities, people tend to be younger and more highly educated.

Table 3 provides a summary of social and economic characteristics by county. Figures 6-10 show how these characteristics vary across space.

Table 3
Demographic Characteristics in the Great Northwest Region

	Total Population	Median Age	Female	College Educated	American Indian	Median HH Income	Median Housing Value
Ashland County	16,866	36.9	50.7%	17%	10.3%	\$31,628	\$60,400
Barron County	44,963	38.8	50.5%	15%	0.8%	\$37,275	\$78,000
Bayfield County	15,013	42.1	49.4%	22%	9.4%	\$33,390	\$86,100
Burnett County	15,674	44.1	49.6%	14%	4.5%	\$34,218	\$87,500
Douglas County	43,287	37.7	50.7%	18%	1.8%	\$35,226	\$69,900
Polk County	41,319	38.7	50.0%	16%	1.1%	\$41,183	\$100,200
Rusk County	15,347	40.0	50.4%	11%	0.4%	\$31,344	\$63,200
Sawyer County	16,196	42.1	49.6%	16%	16.1%	\$32,287	\$94,300
Washburn County	16,036	42.1	49.7%	15%	1.0%	\$33,716	\$85,700
Great Northwest Region	224,701	39.6	50.2%	16%	3.7%	\$35,648	\$82,354

Source: Census 2000

Note: Regional "medians" represent the weighted average of constituent county medians;

Percent college educated calculated for persons age 25 and older; Housing value calculated for owner occupied housing units.

In comparison with other Regions, the Great Northwest has a relatively old population. Median age for the state of Wisconsin as a whole is 36 years, compared to almost 40 years in the Great Northwest. The population in Burnett County is especially old, with a median age of over 44 years, and some areas of Burnett and Douglas Counties have median ages above 51 years.

In terms of sex ratios, the Great Northwest has moderately more females than males. This difference is probably due, at least in part, to the aging population and females' greater longevity.

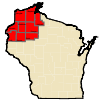
Racially, the Great Northwest is predominately white, with concentrations of American Indians on and near reservation land in Ashland, Bayfield, Sawyer, and Burnett Counties.



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Income, housing values, and college education rates are relatively low in the Great Northwest Region. Polk County has the highest median income and median housing value in the Great Northwest, due to its proximity to the Twin Cities metropolitan area in Minnesota. The lowest income and housing values are found in Ashland and Rusk Counties where population has seen some decline and seasonal housing is not as prominent. The proportion of people with a 4-year college degree is lower in the Great Northwest than in the state of Wisconsin as a whole. Only Bayfield County has proportionately as many college educated people as the state median (about 22%).



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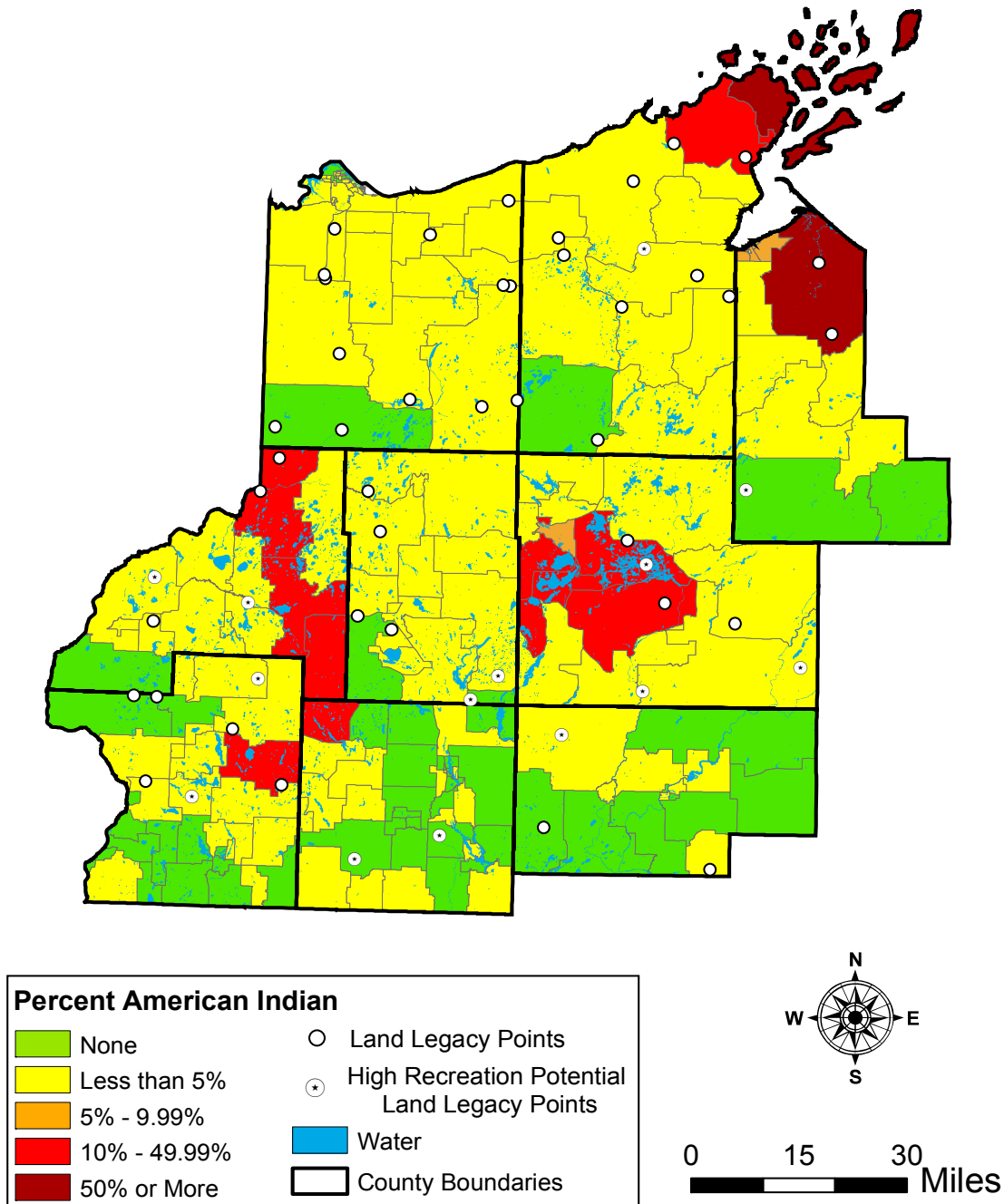
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Figure 6

American Indian Population Calculated at Block Group Level



Sources: TIGER 2000, Census 2000



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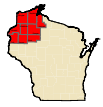
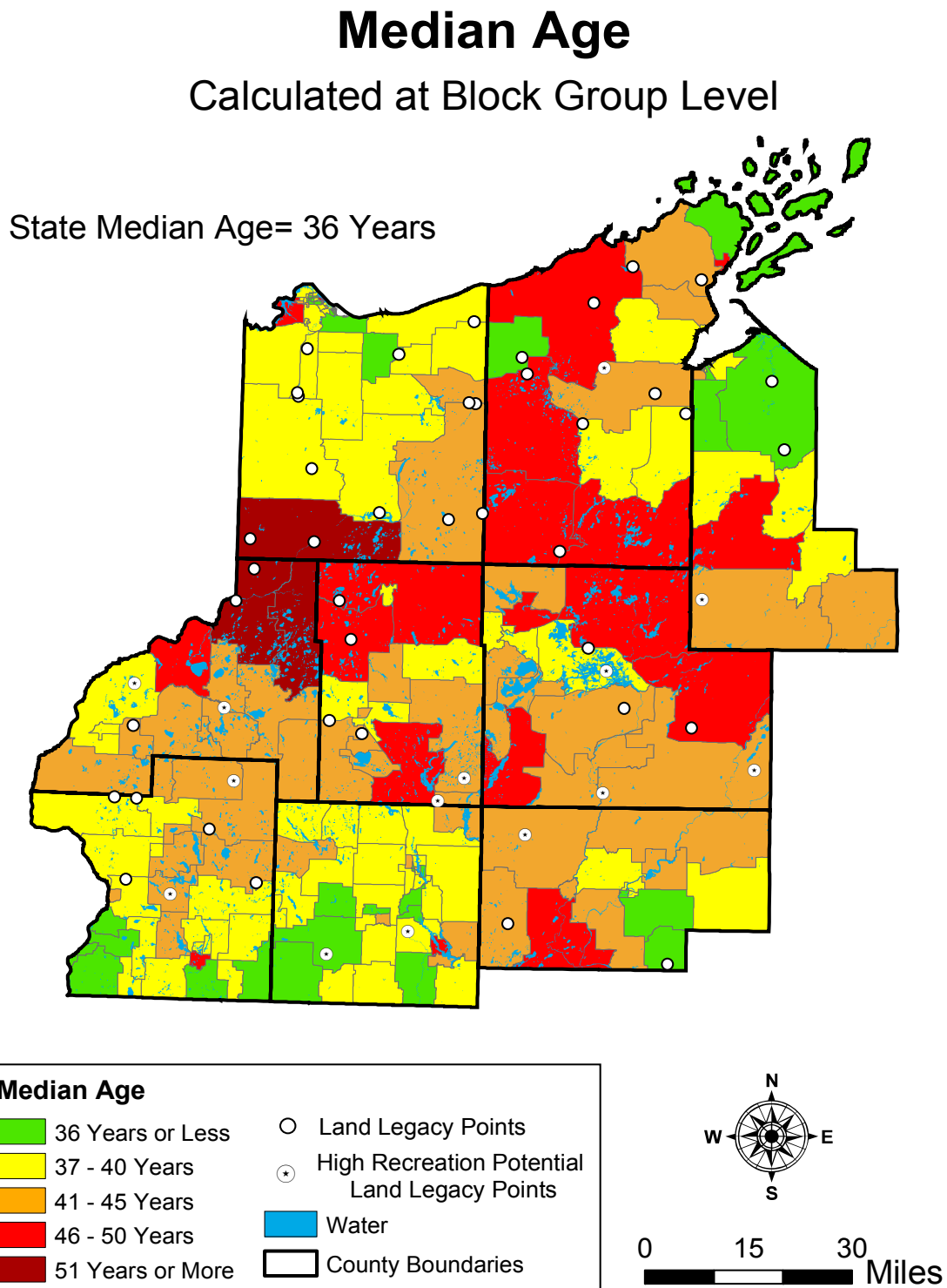


Figure 7



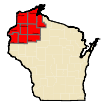
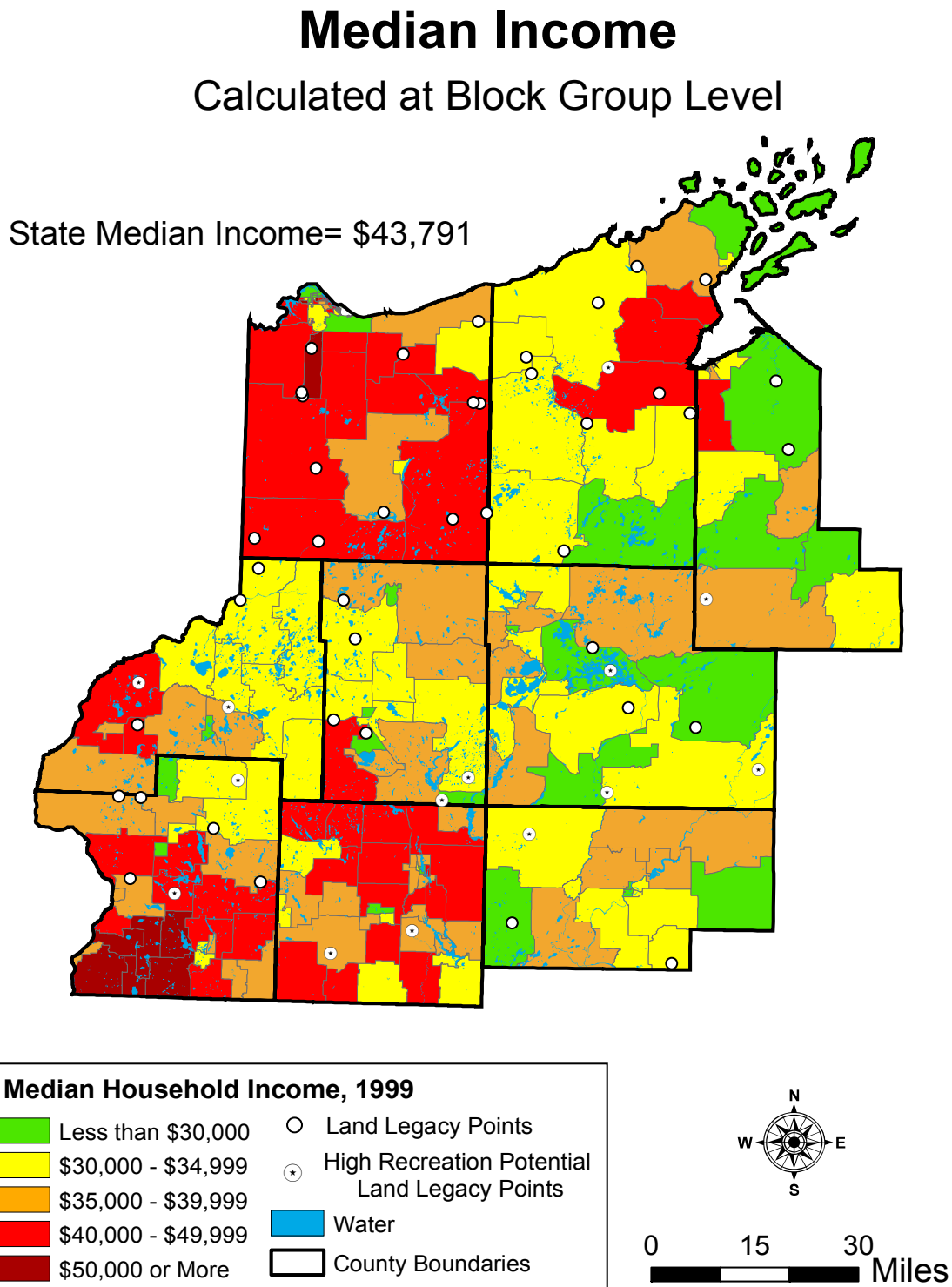


Figure 8



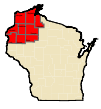
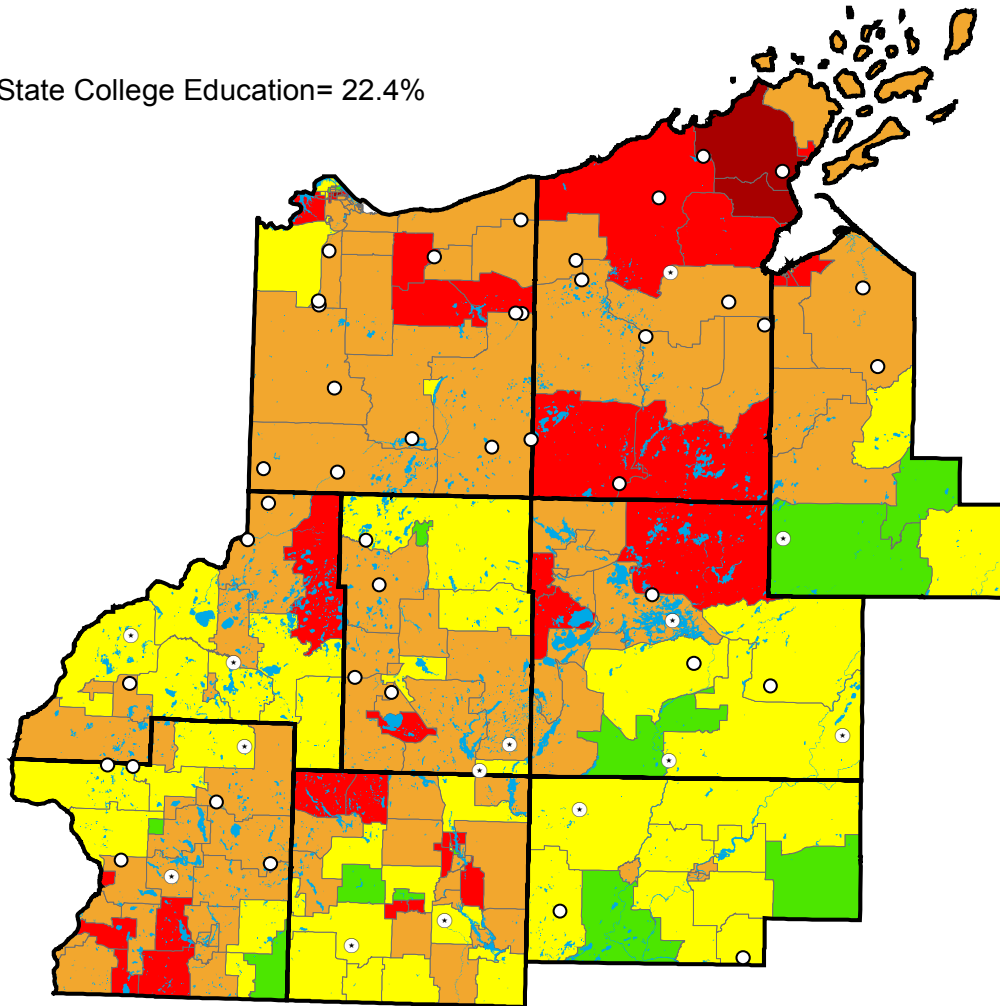


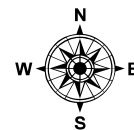
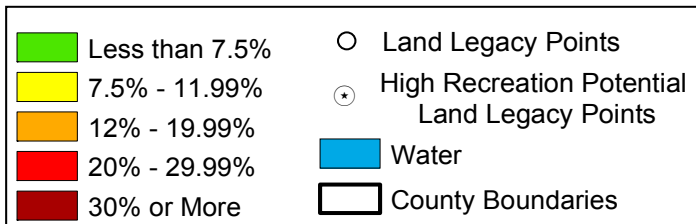
Figure 9

College Education Calculated at Block Group Level

State College Education= 22.4%



Percent of Population aged 25 or Older with a 4-Year College Degree



0 15 30 Miles

Sources: TIGER 2000, Census 2000



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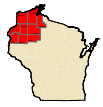
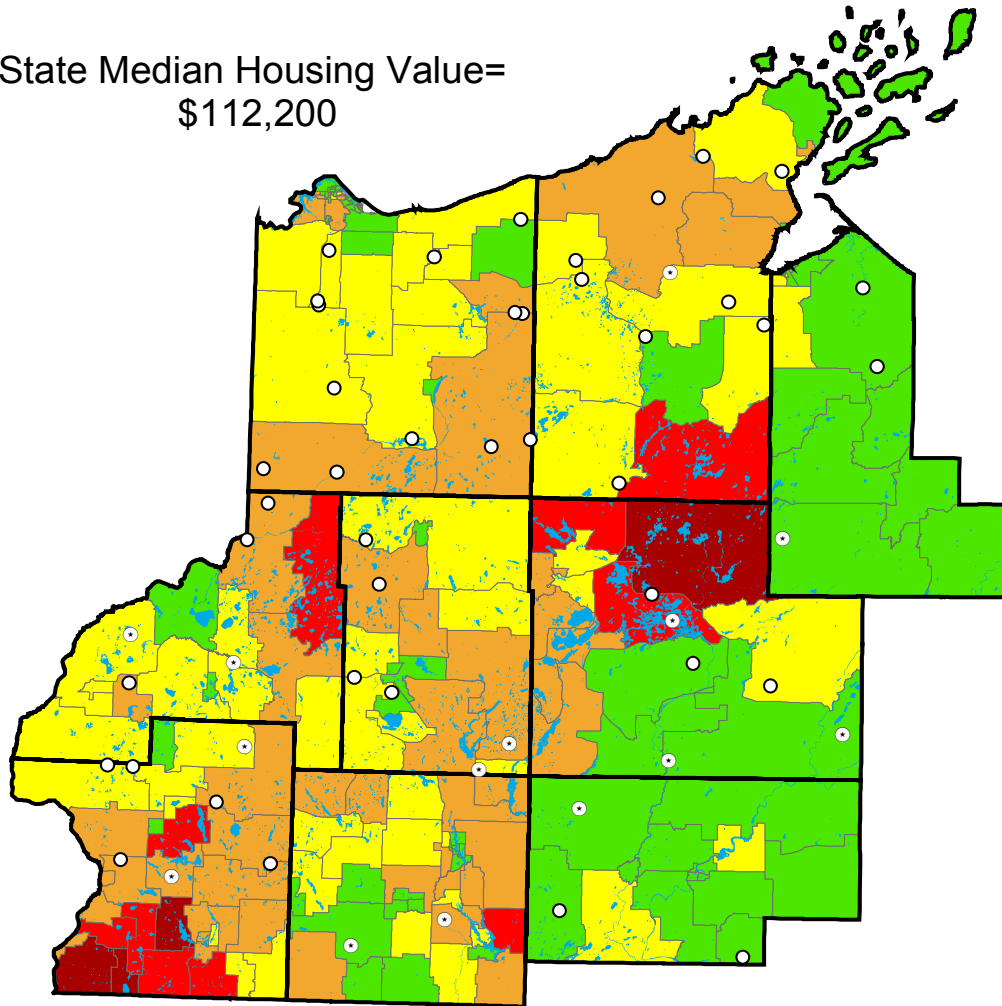





Figure 10

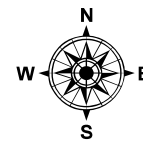
Median Housing Value Calculated at Block Group Level

State Median Housing Value=
\$112,200



Median Housing Value

	Less than \$75,000		Land Legacy Points
	\$75,000 - \$89,999		High Recreation Potential Land Legacy Points
	\$90,000 - \$109,999		Water
	\$110,000 - \$134,999		County Boundaries
	\$135,000 or More		



0 15 30
Miles

Sources: TIGER 2000, Census 2000



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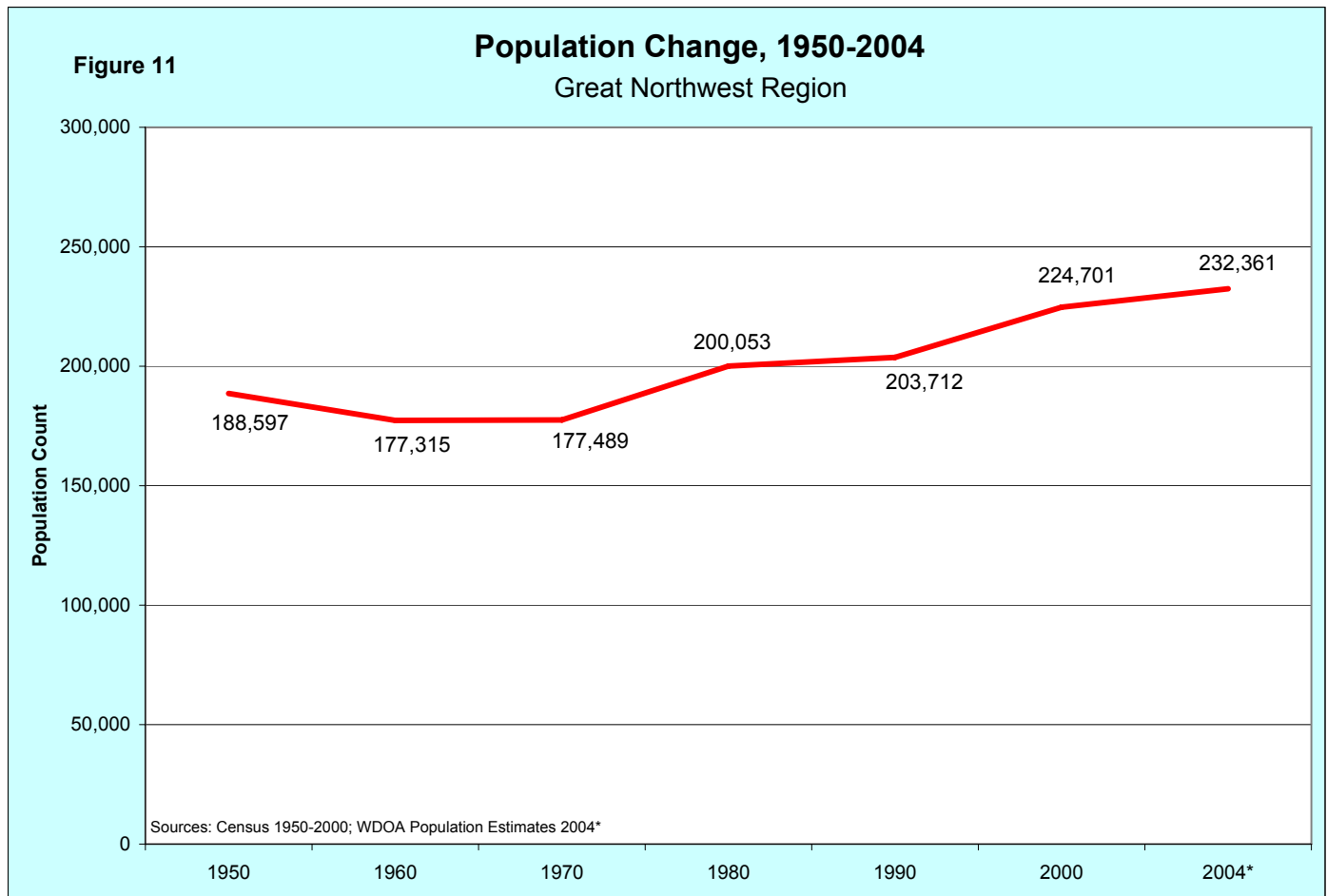




Looking at historical changes in population and housing may help to explain past and future trends in recreational participation. In this section, we examine demographic change in the Great Northwest Region. We consider the growth, urbanization, and shifting age structure of the Great Northwest population. In addition, we detail: where housing development has occurred, shifts in the prevalence of seasonal housing, and the impact that natural amenities (like lakes and forests) have had on population and housing growth.

POPULATION CHANGE

Although the Great Northwest remains predominately rural, it has experienced steady population growth since about 1970. Figure 11 shows Regional population counts from 1950-2004. Between 1970 and 2004, the Great Northwest Region gained 54,872 people for an increase of about 31% over the 34 year period. The rate of increase was fast in the 1970s and 1990s and has been relatively fast in the last four years, growing by 3.4% between 2000 and 2004 (or 0.9% annually).



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Population growth does not occur evenly across space, and while some parts of the Great Northwest Region have continually experienced population growth, other areas have experienced decline. Table 4 shows population change over time by county. Polk County and Barron County (the closest two counties to the Twin Cities metropolitan area) have been growing quickly in recent decades. Washburn and Burnett Counties have also experienced growth since about 1970. Douglas, Rusk and Ashland Counties have stagnated and even experienced some decline in population.

Table 4a
Population Counts over Time in the Great Northwest Region

	Population Count						
	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2004*
Ashland County	19,461	17,375	16,743	16,783	16,307	16,866	16,969
Barron County	34,703	34,270	33,955	38,730	40,750	44,963	46,540
Bayfield County	13,760	11,910	11,683	13,822	14,008	15,013	15,575
Burnett County	10,236	9,214	9,276	12,340	13,084	15,674	16,398
Douglas County	46,715	45,008	44,657	44,421	41,758	43,287	43,708
Polk County	24,944	24,968	26,666	32,351	34,773	41,319	43,870
Rusk County	16,790	14,794	14,238	15,589	15,079	15,347	15,512
Sawyer County	10,323	9,475	9,670	12,843	14,181	16,196	17,027
Washburn County	11,665	10,301	10,601	13,174	13,772	16,036	16,762
Great Northwest Region	188,597	177,315	177,489	200,053	203,712	224,701	232,361

* Estimate from Wisconsin Dept. of Administration

Sources: Census 1950-2000, Wisconsin Dept. of Administration, 2004

Table 4b
Population Change over Time in the Great Northwest Region

	Population Change				Percent Change				Average Annual Percent Increase			
	1950-1970	1970-1990	1990-2000	2000-2004	1950-1970	1970-1990	1990-2000	2000-2004	1950-1970	1970-1990	1990-2000	2000-2004
Ashland County	-2,718	-436	559	103	-14.0%	-2.6%	3.4%	0.6%	-0.7%	-0.1%	0.3%	0.2%
Barron County	-748	6,795	4,213	1,577	-2.2%	20.0%	10.3%	3.5%	-0.1%	1.0%	1.0%	0.9%
Bayfield County	-2,077	2,325	1,005	562	-15.1%	19.9%	7.2%	3.7%	-0.8%	1.0%	0.7%	0.9%
Burnett County	-960	3,808	2,590	724	-9.4%	41.1%	19.8%	4.6%	-0.5%	2.1%	2.0%	1.2%
Douglas County	-2,058	-2,899	1,529	421	-4.4%	-6.5%	3.7%	1.0%	-0.2%	-0.3%	0.4%	0.2%
Polk County	1,722	8,107	6,546	2,551	6.9%	30.4%	18.8%	6.2%	0.3%	1.5%	1.9%	1.5%
Rusk County	-2,552	841	268	165	-15.2%	5.9%	1.8%	1.1%	-0.8%	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%
Sawyer County	-653	4,511	2,015	831	-6.3%	46.6%	14.2%	5.1%	-0.3%	2.3%	1.4%	1.3%
Washburn County	-1,064	3,171	2,264	726	-9.1%	29.9%	16.4%	4.5%	-0.5%	1.5%	1.6%	1.1%
Great Northwest Region	-11,108	26,223	20,989	7,660	-5.9%	14.8%	10.3%	3.4%	-0.3%	0.7%	1.0%	0.9%

Sources: Census 1950-2000, Wisconsin DOA 2004

Figure 12 shows the average annual percent increase in population that municipalities experienced over four time periods. Data are fitted to 2003 municipal boundaries.



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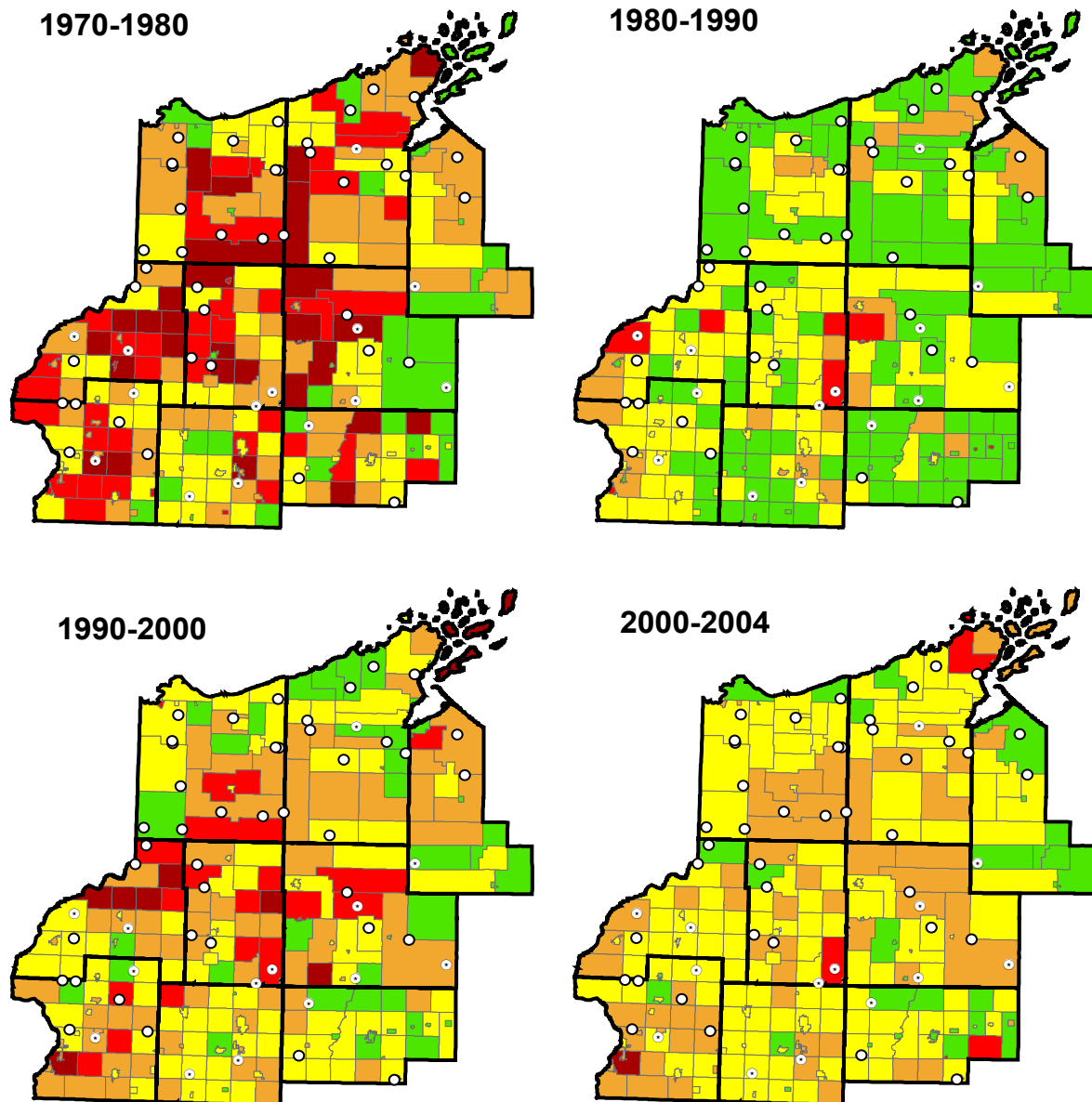




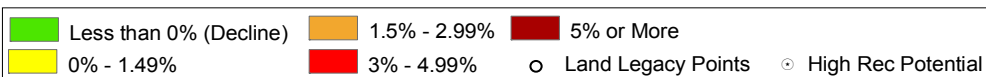
Figure 12

Population Change 1970-2004

Calculated at the Municipal Level



Average Annual Percent Change: Great Northwest Region



Sources:
Wisconsin DOA, 2004
Population Estimates
TIGER 2003



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AGE STRUCTURE

Demographers refer to the proportion of different aged people in the population as the population's age structure. Table 5 shows how median age has changed from 1950-2000 in the Great Northwest Region. In general, the population has gotten older over the last 50 years, with the median age increasing by almost 9 years for the Region as a whole. Most of this increase occurred between 1980 and 2000, as the Baby Boom generation began to reach older ages.

Table 5
Median Age in the Great Northwest Region, 1950-2000

	Median Age					
	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Ashland County	30.5	32.0	31.1	31.4	33.7	36.9
Barron County	30.1	31.0	31.6	31.3	34.5	38.8
Bayfield County	32.7	35.8	35.1	33.4	37.2	42.1
Burnett County	32.4	35.9	39.4	36.1	39.2	44.1
Douglas County	32.4	32.0	29.3	30.3	34.8	37.7
Polk County	31.4	32.9	31.8	31.4	34.6	38.7
Rusk County	28.4	30.1	30.4	30.7	35.2	40.0
Sawyer County	32.9	35.9	37.2	34.9	38.2	42.1
Washburn County	30.9	34.2	35.5	34.0	38.0	42.1
Great Northwest Region	31.2	32.6	32.1	31.9	35.5	39.6

Source: Census 1950-2000

Note: Regional medians are derived from the weighted median of the county median ages.

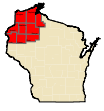
The aging of the population in the Great Northwest is affected, in part, by migration patterns. Migration processes affect both population counts and the age structure of the population. The balance of in- and out-migration for a local area is known as "net migration." Net in-migration means that migration is contributing to (depending on natural increase in the specific area) population growth, while net out-migration would contribute to population decline. Migration especially impacts the age structure of a local population when people of different age groups experience opposite migration trends. For instance, young people tend to move out of more rural areas of the state; and older people tend to retire in natural amenity-rich rural areas. This means that many rural areas in Wisconsin are experiencing an aging population due, in part, to migration. Such age patterns will impact demand for different types of outdoor recreation.



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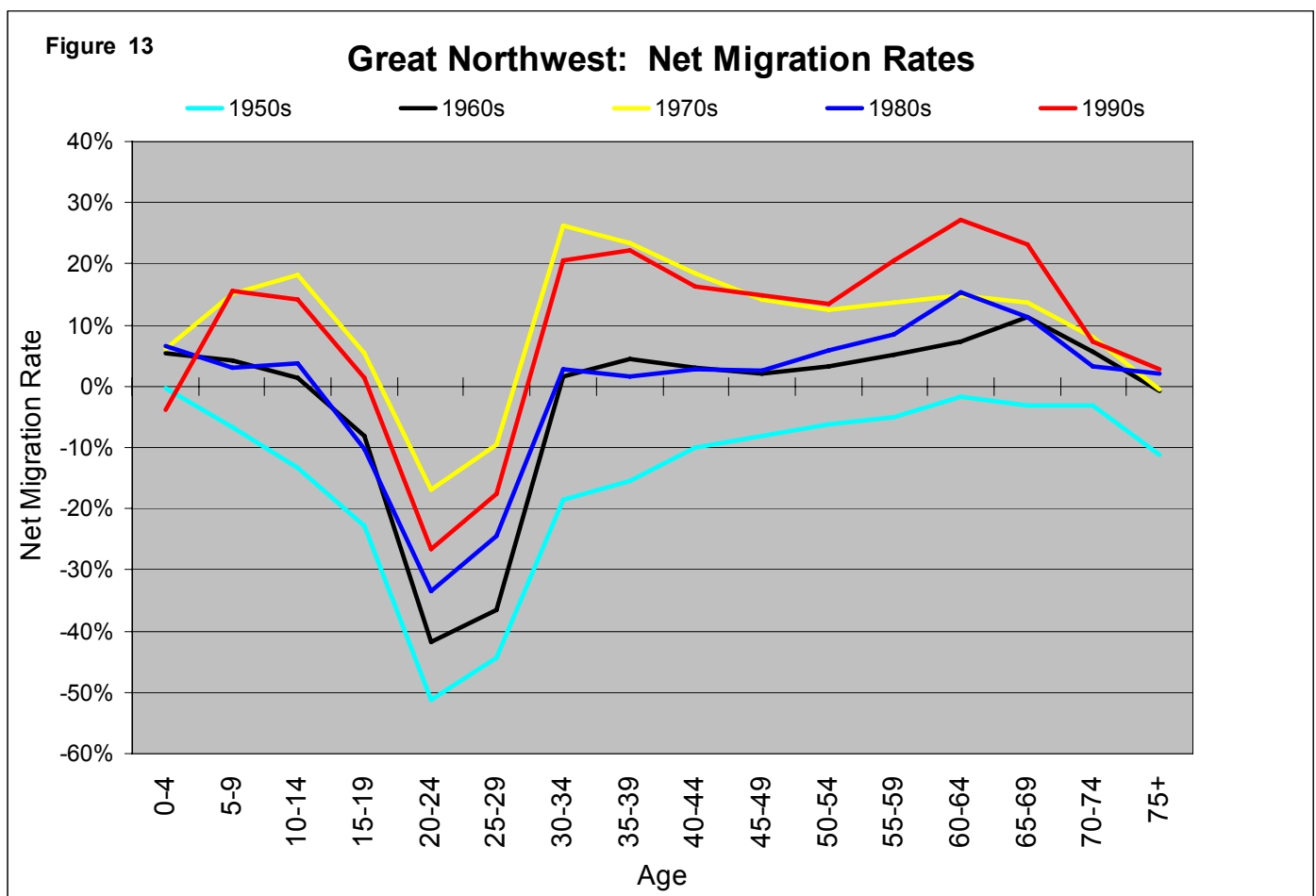
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NET MIGRATION BY AGE

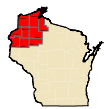
Figure 13 summarizes age-specific net migration patterns for the Great Northwest Region from 1950-2000. For example, in the 1950's the Great Northwest experienced a net out-migration (below "0%" line) at every age group, especially of young adults. The 1950's net migration line tells us that the population aged 20-24 in 1960 was about 50% less than the population aged 10-14 in 1950. Between 1990 and 2000, the Great Northwest still experienced a net loss of young adults, but saw a net increase in population at other age groups, especially of adults at early retirement age. Such migration patterns will influence the number of young adults and older people in the local population.



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URBANIZATION

Over time the population of the U.S. and of Wisconsin has become increasingly urban. In 1900, about 38% of Wisconsin residents lived in urban areas. By 2000, this proportion had increased to 68%.

The urban population has increased more quickly than the rural population in the U.S. due to both natural increase and migration. In the past, rural residents tended to have more children than urban residents, but over the last several decades, this trend has switched and urban areas have higher birth rates than rural ones. In 2003, Wisconsin metropolitan counties had 13.3 births for every 1,000 residents, while non-metropolitan counties had only 11.3 (calculated from Wisconsin Dept. of Health and Family Services data). In addition, people have tended to move out of rural areas and off farms and into urban areas over the past several decades.

Table 6 shows the percent of the population living in urban areas 1950-2000. The declining proportion shown in the table below for the Great Northwest contrasts with state and national-level trends. This is because the Region as a whole is quite rural, with no large metropolitan centers. Most of the urban decline occurred in Ashland and Douglas counties, because the City of Ashland and the City of Superior have lost population since 1970.

Table 6
Urbanization in the Great Northwest Region, 1950-2000

	Percent Living in Urban Areas					
	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Ashland County	54.7%	58.3%	57.4%	54.3%	52.6%	46.5%
Barron County	19.9%	21.3%	21.4%	26.6%	27.0%	27.9%
Bayfield County	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Burnett County	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Douglas County	76.3%	75.4%	73.3%	67.9%	66.1%	61.6%
Polk County	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.6%	6.9%
Rusk County	23.4%	24.2%	25.8%	24.5%	26.1%	25.9%
Sawyer County	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Washburn County	22.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.5%
Great Northwest Region	31.7%	31.0%	30.0%	26.7%	26.4%	25.1%

Source: Census 1950-2000

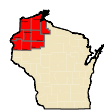
Note: Some of the differences shown here, may be the result of changes in the way "urban" is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau.



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MINORITY GROUPS

Wisconsin, in general, has a predominately White/Non-Hispanic population (87% in 2000). Though the number of minority residents has been increasing over the last few decades, minority groups still constitute a small proportion of the population for most Regions.

In the Great Northwest Region, 94% of the population identified as Non-Hispanic and White on the 2000 Census. American Indians/Alaskan Natives made up the largest minority group in this Region, representing almost 4% of the total population.

Table 7 shows the American Indian population 1960-2000. The number of American Indians in the Great Northwest Region increased from 4,680 residents in 1960 to 8,267 residents in 2000, for an overall increase of 77%.

Table 7
Changing Race and Ethnicity, 1960-2000

	Number of American Indian Persons					Percent Change		
	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000
Ashland County	650	716	1,077	1,478	1,745	50.4%	37.2%	18.1%
Barron County	66	69	152	209	363	120.3%	37.5%	73.7%
Bayfield County	459	596	923	1,240	1,409	54.9%	34.3%	13.6%
Burnett County	260	249	399	532	698	60.2%	33.3%	31.2%
Douglas County	126	250	582	805	786	132.8%	38.3%	-2.4%
Polk County	164	116	215	321	436	85.3%	49.3%	35.8%
Rusk County	12	30	66	82	65	120.0%	24.2%	-20.7%
Sawyer County	2,904	861	1,392	2,167	2,603	61.7%	55.7%	20.1%
Washburn County	39	62	90	122	162	45.2%	35.6%	32.8%
Great Northwest Region	4,680	2,949	4,896	6,956	8,267	66%	42%	19%

Source: Census 1950-2000

Note: Methods of data collection and reporting on race and ethnicity in the Census have changed over the years. Consequently, data for some years are not available or have been estimated, and some of the changes seen above may be artificial. Definitions were relatively stable between 1990 and 2000.

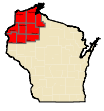
Note: Use of terminology and “labels” when talking about racial ethnic populations can be a sensitive issue. The authors of this report understand that there are some political, cultural and social preferences and implications in using particular terminology. We have chosen to use language that reflects Census-designated racial and ethnic categories in this report.



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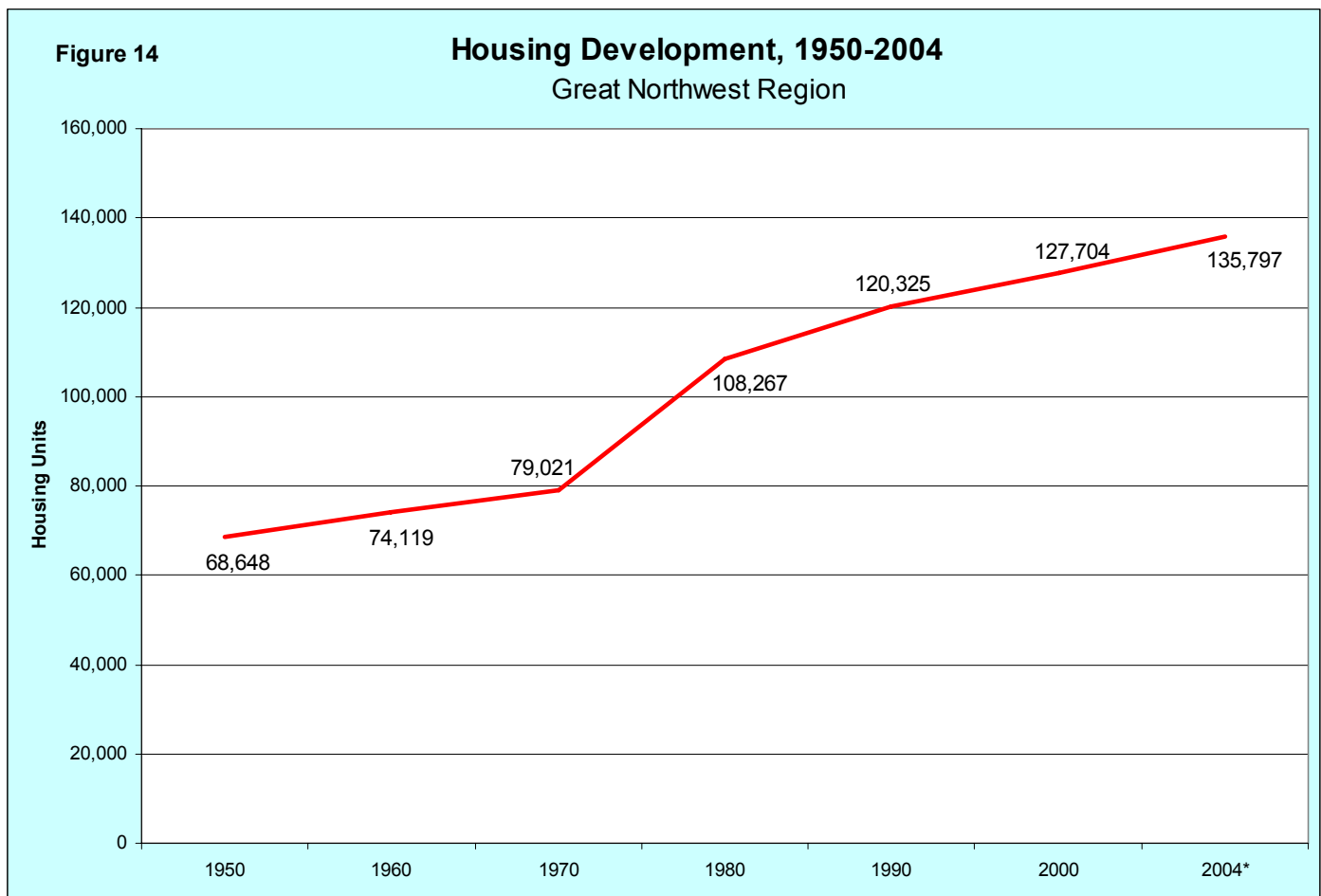




HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Just as population in the Great Northwest Region has increased over time, so too has housing development. Figure 14 and Table 8 show the trajectory of housing growth for the Region and by county between 1950 and 2004. The number of housing units increased from 68,648 units in 1950 to 135,797 in 2004, for an overall increase of 98%. The fastest rate of growth occurred in the 1970's, when housing units increased by 37% over the one decade.

Polk County has consistently experienced rapid housing development since 1950. Sawyer, Burnett, and Washburn Counties have also experienced a relatively quick pace of housing growth, especially in particular time periods. Between 1970 and 1990, the number of housing units in Sawyer County more than doubled, increasing by 101%. As with population change, Ashland, Douglas, and Rusk Counties have seen fewer housing developments over the last fifty years.



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Table 8a
Housing Development over Time in the Great Northwest Region

	Number of Housing Units						
	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2004*
Ashland County	6,232	6,203	6,516	7,781	8,371	8,883	9,195
Barron County	11,540	12,699	12,673	17,153	19,363	20,969	22,409
Bayfield County	5,870	5,867	6,789	9,642	10,918	11,640	12,480
Burnett County	4,503	4,450	6,698	10,359	11,743	12,582	13,332
Douglas County	15,487	16,914	16,882	20,141	20,610	20,356	21,032
Polk County	9,029	10,144	11,799	16,228	18,562	21,129	23,005
Rusk County	5,345	5,270	5,476	7,194	7,904	7,609	7,977
Sawyer County	5,591	7,230	6,452	11,053	13,025	13,722	14,754
Washburn County	5,051	5,342	5,736	8,716	9,829	10,814	11,613
Great Northwest Region	68,648	74,119	79,021	108,267	120,325	127,704	135,797

* Estimate from Wisconsin Dept. of Administration
Sources: Census 1950-2000, Wisconsin Dept. of Administration, 2004

Table 8b
Housing Development over Time in the Great Northwest Region

	Housing Unit Change				Percent Change				Average Annual Percent Increase			
	1950-1970	1970-1990	1990-2000	2000-2004	1950-1970	1970-1990	1990-2000	2000-2004	1950-1970	1970-1990	1990-2000	2000-2004
Ashland County	284	1,855	512	312	4.6%	28.5%	6.1%	3.5%	0.2%	1.4%	0.6%	0.9%
Barron County	1,133	6,690	1,606	1,440	9.8%	52.8%	8.3%	6.9%	0.5%	2.6%	0.8%	1.7%
Bayfield County	919	4,129	722	840	15.7%	60.8%	6.6%	7.2%	0.8%	3.0%	0.7%	1.8%
Burnett County	2,195	5,045	839	750	48.7%	75.3%	7.1%	6.0%	2.4%	3.8%	0.7%	1.5%
Douglas County	1,395	3,728	-254	676	9.0%	22.1%	-1.2%	3.3%	0.5%	1.1%	-0.1%	0.8%
Polk County	2,770	6,763	2,567	1,876	30.7%	57.3%	13.8%	8.9%	1.5%	2.9%	1.4%	2.2%
Rusk County	131	2,428	-295	368	2.5%	44.3%	-3.7%	4.8%	0.1%	2.2%	-0.4%	1.2%
Sawyer County	861	6,573	697	1,032	15.4%	101.9%	5.4%	7.5%	0.8%	5.1%	0.5%	1.9%
Washburn County	685	4,093	985	799	13.6%	71.4%	10.0%	7.4%	0.7%	3.6%	1.0%	1.8%
Great Northwest Region	10,373	41,304	7,379	8,093	15.1%	52.3%	6.1%	6.3%	0.8%	2.6%	0.6%	1.6%

Figure 15 shows housing density between 1950 and 2000 at the Census Block Group level. The maps show the approximate number of housing units per square mile in each decade. We can see how the landscape has gradually filled up with increasing numbers of homes, especially in the southwest part of the Great Northwest Region, near the Twin Cities metropolitan area.



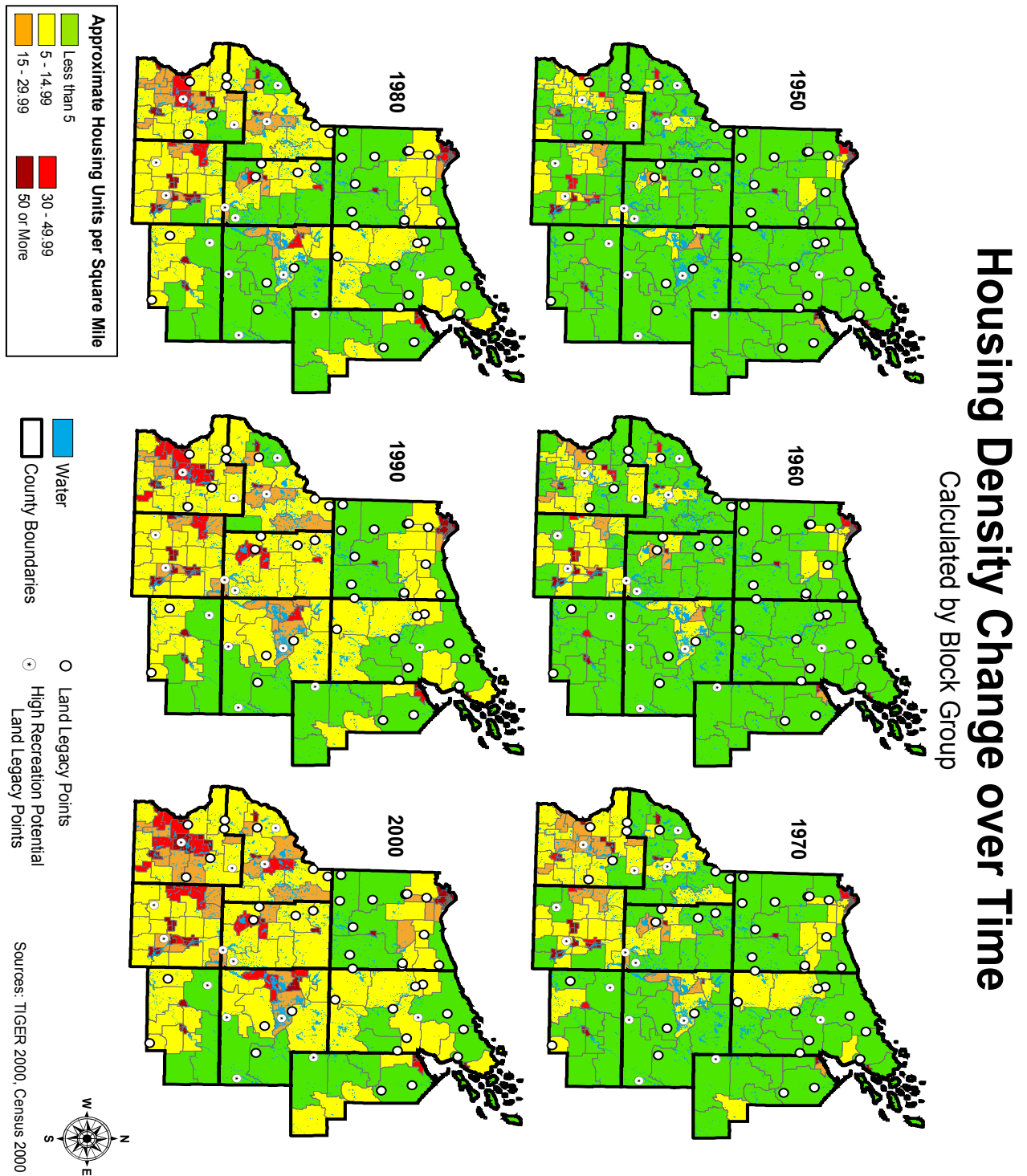
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Figure 15

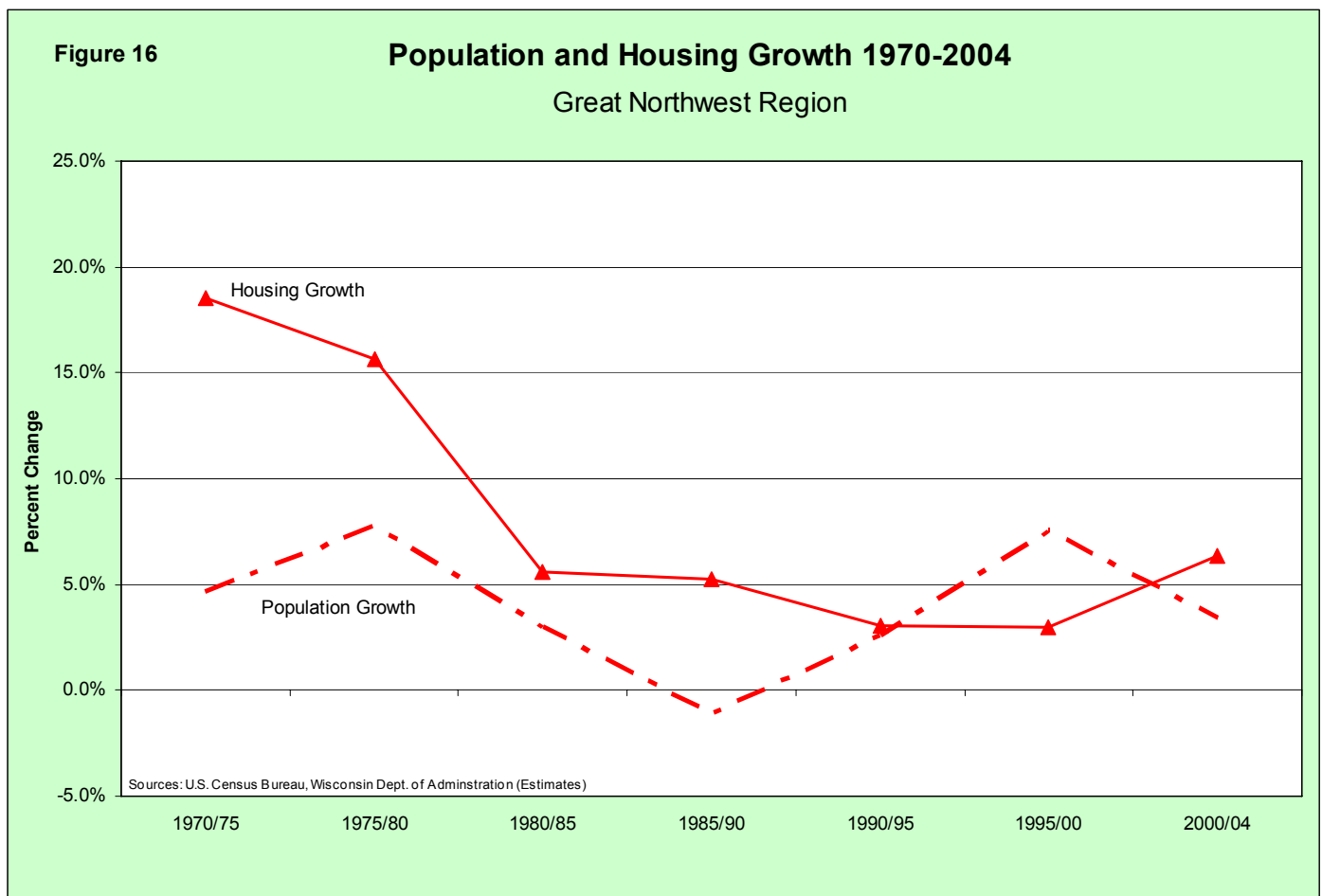




Assuming that more people need more houses, we would expect housing growth to occur in relation to population growth. In reality, housing development depends on factors other than population growth, such as: seasonal housing, interest rates, decisions of policy makers and residential developers, and the number of people per household. For this reason, we sometimes see housing growth that outpaces population growth, and vice versa.

Figure 16 shows how housing development has occurred with relation to population growth over the last few decades in the Great Northwest Region. The chart shows the percent change in each time period, with 0% meaning that the number of housing units and/or population in the Region did not change at all, negative percentages depicting a decline, and positive percentages showing percent of increase.

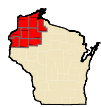
In the 1970's housing growth occurred at a very rapid rate. In 1975 the number of housing units in the Region was about 19% higher than the number of housing units in 1970, while the number of people in 1975 was about 5% higher than the number of people in 1970. Housing development has consistently outpaced population growth in the Great Northwest Region (except for in the late 1990's), in part because of the high proportion of seasonal-use homes in the Region.



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SEASONAL HOUSING

Over that last 50 years, seasonal housing has increasingly become an important factor when thinking about outdoor recreation in the Great Northwest. Table 9 shows the percent of all housing units that were for seasonal use 1950-2000.

The number of seasonal homes increased dramatically between 1950 and 1990, from 9,895 homes to 34,632 (an increase of 250%). Then, between 1990 and 2000, the number of seasonal homes dropped, due to conversion into full-time residencies. During the 1990's many people chose to retire and live full-time in homes that were previously only for seasonal use. Despite this recent drop, seasonal housing remains an important factor to consider for outdoor recreation in the Great Northwest Region, with 25% of all housing units being for seasonal use.

Table 9
Seasonal Housing in the Great Northwest Region, 1950-2000

	Number of Seasonal Housing Units						Percent Seasonal		
	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	1960	1980	2000
Ashland County	388	635	773	1,135	1,442	1,646	10%	14.6%	18.5%
Barron County	1,198	1,902	1,009	2,531	2,895	2,299	15%	14.8%	11.0%
Bayfield County	1,457	1,810	1,625	3,982	4,430	4,922	31%	41.3%	42.3%
Burnett County	1,105	1,307	2,126	5,365	5,870	5,664	29%	51.8%	45.0%
Douglas County	933	2,225	1,165	2,743	3,068	1,744	13%	13.6%	8.6%
Polk County	1,190	1,998	1,382	4,011	4,634	4,211	20%	24.7%	19.9%
Rusk County	321	730	657	1,437	1,665	1,148	14%	20.0%	15.1%
Sawyer County	2,038	4,039	1,995	5,796	6,824	6,658	56%	52.4%	48.5%
Washburn County	1,266	1,854	584	3,383	3,804	3,812	35%	38.8%	35.3%
Great Northwest Region	9,895	16,500	11,315	30,383	34,632	32,104	22%	28.1%	25.1%

Source: Census 1950-2000

Note: Data collection and reporting on seasonal housing have changed over the years. Consequently, data for some years have been estimated.

Note: Because of changing Census definitions and compilation methods over time, the data shown here are not perfectly comparable between decades, and they do not represent the exact truth. Rather, these data are estimates of the actual proportions of seasonal housing units, and they offer a general understanding of how seasonal housing has fluctuated over the time period.



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NATURAL AMENITIES, RECREATION AND POPULATION CHANGE

Researchers (i.e. David McGranahan, Calvin Beale, and Ken Johnson) have found evidence that natural amenities (like climate, topography, forests, lakes, and rivers) and recreational resources are associated with population growth in some rural areas. The idea is that many people are attracted to natural amenities and want to live in or near places that offer natural beauty and recreational opportunities. According to this line of thought, we might expect areas rich in natural amenities to experience disproportionately high population and housing growth. This is important to consider because population and housing growth in these amenity rich areas will impact the supply and demand for outdoor recreation, as well as the integrity of the natural environment.

We can get an idea of what the capacity for such amenity-based growth might be the Great Northwest Region by looking at land cover. Table 10 shows land cover types in the Great Northwest Region, as they existed in 1992. The Region is heavily forested and has a significant amount of inland water (lakes and rivers). Few areas have urban development, and agricultural use is largely restricted to Barron, Polk, and Rusk Counties.

Table 10
Land Cover in the Great Northwest

	Urban	Agricultural	Grassland	Forest	Water	Wetland	Barren	Shrubland
Ashland County	0.3%	1.4%	7.3%	63.4%	1.7%	24.6%	0.3%	1.0%
Barron County	0.6%	38.7%	12.2%	34.2%	3.3%	7.0%	3.2%	0.8%
Bayfield County	0.1%	0.7%	10.1%	75.0%	2.5%	8.1%	0.4%	3.0%
Burnett County	0.2%	3.4%	15.5%	48.9%	5.9%	20.2%	0.3%	5.7%
Douglas County	1.0%	0.4%	10.4%	57.5%	2.8%	22.0%	0.5%	5.4%
Polk County	0.5%	21.2%	25.7%	37.8%	4.4%	9.3%	0.3%	0.7%
Rusk County	0.2%	17.0%	5.3%	54.6%	2.4%	18.6%	1.1%	0.8%
Sawyer County	0.1%	2.8%	5.4%	65.2%	7.4%	18.3%	0.3%	0.4%
Washburn County	0.2%	4.7%	11.8%	60.6%	5.7%	14.0%	0.4%	2.5%
Great Northwest Region	0.4%	8.6%	11.1%	57.1%	4.0%	15.8%	0.7%	2.3%
Wisconsin State	1.6%	30.8%	10.7%	37.5%	3.4%	14.1%	1.1%	0.9%

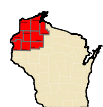
Source: Wisconsin DNR Wisland, 1998



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In their research, Beale and Johnson have identified non-metropolitan counties that have a great deal of tourism, recreation and entertainment, and seasonal housing. They call these counties “Nonmetro Recreation Counties,” and they find that across the U.S., Recreation Counties have experienced especially high net migration rates, and higher population growth rates than either metro counties or other nonmetro counties (Johnson and Beale, 2002).

In the Great Northwest, Bayfield, Burnett, Sawyer, and Washburn Counties are considered “recreational.” These counties (along with Polk County) have consistently grown at a faster rate than other counties in the Great Northwest. They also are the counties with the most forest (Bayfield County- 75%) and the most water (Sawyer- 7.4%, Burnett- 5.9%, and Washburn- 5.7%). Table 11 compares population and housing change over time in Recreation Counties to other counties in the Great Northwest.

Table 11
Natural Amenities, Recreation, and Population Change: Great Northwest Region

	Land Cover		Population Change			Housing Change		
	% Forest	% Water	1970-1990	1990-2000	2000-2004	1970-1990	1990-2000	2000-2004
Recreation Counties								
Bayfield County	75.0%	2.5%	19.9%	7.2%	3.7%	60.8%	6.6%	7.2%
Burnett County	48.9%	5.9%	41.1%	19.8%	4.6%	75.3%	7.1%	6.0%
Sawyer County	65.2%	7.4%	46.6%	14.2%	5.1%	101.9%	5.4%	7.5%
Washburn County	60.6%	5.7%	29.9%	16.4%	4.5%	71.4%	10.0%	7.4%
Other Counties								
Ashland County	63.4%	1.7%	-2.6%	3.4%	0.6%	28.5%	6.1%	3.5%
Barron County	34.2%	3.3%	20.0%	10.3%	3.5%	52.8%	8.3%	6.9%
Douglas County	57.5%	2.8%	-6.5%	3.7%	1.0%	22.1%	-1.2%	3.3%
Polk County	37.8%	4.4%	30.4%	18.8%	6.2%	57.3%	13.8%	8.9%
Rusk County	54.6%	2.4%	5.9%	1.8%	1.1%	44.3%	-3.7%	4.8%

Sources: Census 1950-2000; Wisconsin Dept. of Administration, 2004; Wisconsin DNR WiscLand, 1998

It is important to note that several other factors (in addition to land cover and recreational opportunity) impact population and housing growth. For instance, distance from major cities and transportation routes also play large roles in determining population and housing growth rates. These factors likely account for the observed high growth in Polk County, with its proximity to the Twin Cities.

Because parts of the Great Northwest are isolated from cities and transportation, natural amenity-based population growth may be concentrated in some areas of the Region and limited in others. In this context, we might expect population growth to occur in areas of the Great Northwest with a combination of many lakes and access to cities and/or transportation.



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The Wisconsin DOA provides population projections at the municipality and county levels. At the county level, they provide these projections by age, allowing us to estimate county median ages for coming years. According to these projections, the population of the Great Northwest Region will continue to increase in size and in median age in coming years.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

By 2010 the Great Northwest Region's population is projected to grow to 239,057 residents, an increase of 2.9% over the 2004 population (see Table 12). By 2020 the population of the Region is projected to reach 249,481. Polk County is projected to have the highest rate of increase in the Great Northwest. While projected increases are notable, projected rates of increase for the Great Northwest Region are only about half the rate of population growth experienced in the 1990s.

Table 12
Population Projections for the Great Northwest Region

	Estimate	Projection		Projected Increase		Average Annual % Increase	
	2004	2010	2020	2004-2010	2010-2020	2004-2010	2010-2020
Ashland County	16,969	17,461	18,108	492	647	0.48%	0.37%
Barron County	46,540	47,401	49,386	861	1,985	0.31%	0.42%
Bayfield County	15,575	15,830	16,315	255	485	0.27%	0.31%
Burnett County	16,398	16,993	17,415	595	422	0.60%	0.25%
Douglas County	43,708	44,734	46,281	1,026	1,547	0.39%	0.35%
Polk County	43,870	45,901	49,592	2,031	3,691	0.77%	0.80%
Rusk County	15,512	15,854	16,124	342	270	0.37%	0.17%
Sawyer County	17,027	17,633	18,391	606	758	0.59%	0.43%
Washburn County	16,762	17,250	17,869	488	619	0.49%	0.36%
Great Northwest Region	232,361	239,057	249,481	6,696	10,424	0.48%	0.44%

Source: Wisconsin Dept. of Administration, 2004

Figure 17 shows the percent increase in population projected to occur at the municipality level 2000-2010 and 2010-2020. In general, rates of population growth are projected to be faster 2000-2010 than 2010-2020.

Growth is projected to occur most in the southwestern part of Polk County (especially in the Town of Osceola, surrounding the Village of Dresser), in the southeastern part of Douglas County (in the countryside surrounding Solon Springs), in the northern part of mainland Ashland County (in and around the Bad River Indian Reservation), in the Towns of Birchwood and Bass Lake in Washburn County, and in the Apostle Islands.

High recreational potential land legacy points are located in and around some areas expected to experience high growth in coming years. These include: the Chippewa Flowage area in Sawyer County, Balsam Branch Creek in Polk County, Crex Meadows in Burnett County, and Haugen-Birchwood Lakeland in Washburn County.



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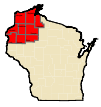
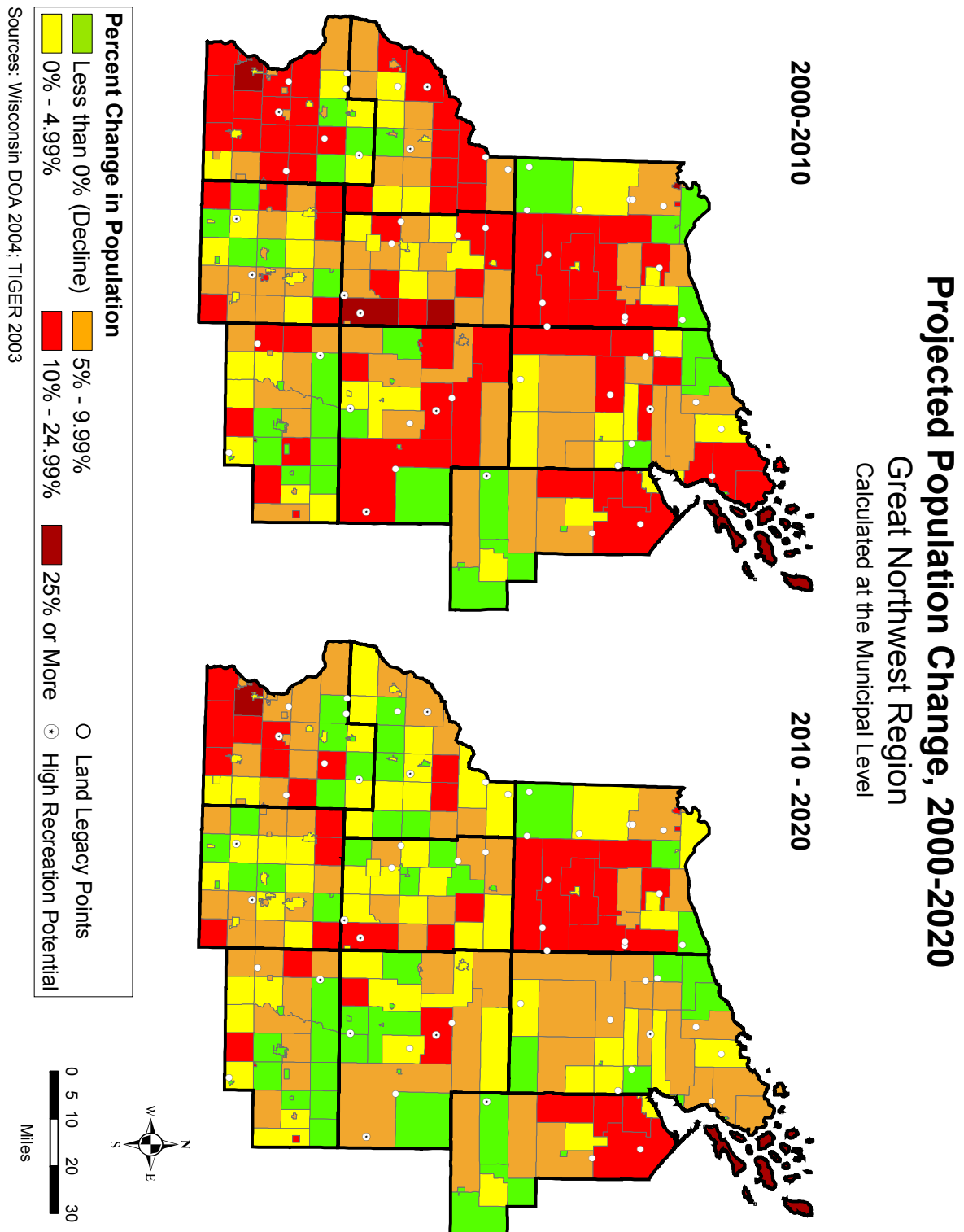


Figure 17



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AGE PROJECTIONS

As mentioned previously, the population in the Great Northwest Region is substantially older than the state of Wisconsin as a whole. Projections suggest that the aging trend will continue in the coming years. Table 13 shows observed and projected median age for counties in the Great Northwest Region 2000-2010. While population across the state of Wisconsin is also projected to grow older over the next few years, population in the Great Northwest Region is projected to age at almost twice the pace of the rest of the state, and in Bayfield, Burnett, and Sawyer Counties, at almost three times the state pace.

By 2010, median age is projected to reach 43.4 years in the Great Northwest Region and 50.1 years in Burnett County.

Table 13
Median Age in the Great Northwest Region, 2000-2010

	Observed 2000	Projected		Change	
		2005	2010	2000-2005	2005-2010
Ashland County	37	38	39	1	1
Barron County	39	41	43	2	2
Bayfield County	42	45	48	3	3
Burnett County	44	47	50	3	3
Douglas County	38	39	40	1	1
Polk County	39	41	42	2	1
Rusk County	40	42	44	2	2
Sawyer County	42	45	47	3	2
Washburn County	42	45	47	3	2
Great Northwest Region	39.7	41.7	43.4	2.0	1.7
Wisconsin State	36.0	37.0	38.0	1.0	1.0

Source: Wisconsin Dept. of Administration, 2004

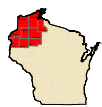
Projected Median Age is estimated from the D.O.A. age-specific population projections, 2004



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CONCLUSIONS

The Great Northwest is a relatively rural Region of the state of Wisconsin. Within the Region, most people live in the Superior/Duluth area or in Polk and Barron Counties, which are closer to the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The Region has experienced population and housing growth over the last few decades and is projected to continue to experience growth in the coming years.

In the Great Northwest, population is substantially older than the rest of the state and is projected to continue to age in the coming years. Income, housing values, and education rates are relatively low in the Great Northwest Region. Seasonal housing and tourism are prevalent in the Region and are important factors to consider in measuring demand for outdoor recreation in the area.

Based on the information shown in this report and from survey data that relates demographic characteristics to participation in outdoor recreational activities (NSRE 2000-2004), we can make some assumptions about the types of outdoor recreation that are popular in the Great Northwest Region and how this relates to geographic and demographic characteristics of the Region. According to the NSRE survey, participation rates for water activities (i.e. boating, swimming in lakes and streams, fishing, and ice fishing), visiting wilderness or primitive areas, day hiking, driving off-road, hunting, snowmobiling, cross country skiing, and downhill skiing are particularly high in the Great Northwest Region.

Geographically, we might expect rates of participation in water-based and snow/ice related activities to be high because of the large number of inland lakes in the Region and because the Region is located in the northern part of the state where temperatures are colder and there is more snow in the winter months. Similarly, wilderness and wildlife-based activities may be particularly prominent in the Region because of the rural nature of the landscape and access to public land.

Demographically, the Great Northwest Region is relatively old, rural, has low income and education rates. Older people tend to participate in viewing or photographing natural scenery (and birds in particular) more than younger people. Ice fishing is also more popular among people aged 45-64 than with younger people. People who live in non-metropolitan areas participate disproportionately in ice fishing, snowmobiling, target shooting, driving for pleasure, driving off-road, driving ATV's, playing volleyball outdoors, and gathering berries and other natural goods. People with lower education levels participate in snowmobiling and paintball games at relatively high rates. These activities might be particularly popular in the Great Northwest Region, in part because of the demographic structure of the Region. However, seasonal residents tend to differ dramatically from full-time residents, particularly in terms of income and education. Seasonal residents (usually clustered around lakes) might be expected to participate most in water-based activities.

National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE): 2000-2004. Versions 1-18 (except 12 & 17), N=2935. Interview dates: 7/99 to 11/04. The Interagency National Survey Consortium, Coordinated by the USDA Forest Service, Recreation, Wilderness, and Demographics Trends Research Group, Athens, GA, the Human Dimensions Research Laboratory, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN.



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